

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement in recognition of the 24th annual World AIDS Day, which takes place on December 1, 2012:

"In recent years, significant progress has been made in the global response to HIV/AIDS. According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the rate of new HIV infections is down by more than 50 percent across 25 low- and middle-income countries, including some with the highest HIV prevalence in the world. Furthermore, many countries are achieving rapid results in reducing AIDS-related deaths and scaling up lifesaving HIV treatment as they continue working towards key development and HIV/AIDS commitment goals.

"Here at home, the United States has also stepped up its leadership with regard to responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis. Most recently, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Ambassador Eric P. Goosby, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, unveiled the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Blueprint: Creating an AIDS-free Generation, which provides a roadmap for how the U.S. government will work to help achieve an AIDS-free generation. In addition, the United States successfully hosted in July the XIX International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2012) in Washington, D.C., marking the return of the premier science and policy event after a misguided travel and immigration ban against people with HIV was lifted in 2010.

"Despite these notable advancements, however, HIV/AIDS continues to spread and affect millions of Americans all across our country. More than 1.1 million people are living with HIV/AIDS in the United States and approximately 50,000 new HIV infections occur each year, with a disproportionate impact on African Americans and gay and bisexual men. Furthermore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that about one in four (26 percent) of these infections are among youth ages 13-24. In 2010 alone, approximately 12,000 young people were infected with HIV. And, whereas one in five adults with HIV is unaware of their infection, three times as many young people with HIV may be unknowingly infecting others.

"It is clear that we must increase our efforts further if we are to achieve an AIDS-free generation. World AIDS Day has long been a critical tool in this endeavor, serving to raise public awareness, remind us of all those affected by HIV/AIDS, and improve prevention and treatment programs. This year's theme for World AIDS Day is 'Working Together for an AIDS-Free Generation.' It is a fact that each and every single one of us has the power – right now – to take steps that will help make an AIDS-free generation a reality. But, in order to

succeed, we must come together and recognize that our actions not only affect ourselves, but those we love, our community, and our nation as a whole.

"Routine testing for HIV remains one of the most powerful ways to prevent the spread of HIV and access treatment if necessary. It is important to remember that putting people on antiretroviral drugs not only helps them live longer, but virtually prevents them from transmitting the virus. If we can get to a point where more people are being treated for HIV than passing it on to others, then we can truly reverse the epidemic. Furthermore, we must continue to address stigma and other related challenges in our communities and as a society by continuing to have an open, honest dialogue about HIV/AIDS, particularly knowing your HIV status and getting care.

"At the federal level, I will continue working with my colleagues in Congress to prevent detrimental cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, the CDC, National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Ryan White Program under the so-called 'sequestration' set to take effect in January 2013, which threaten vital treatment for 15,708 people on the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and housing support for 4,738 households, as well as 460 AIDS research grants. Finally, I remain committed to supporting policies and legislation that promote affordable drug pricing and access for all Americans.

"As we recognize the 24th annual World AIDS Day, it is my sincere hope that we will soon see the beginning of an AIDS-free generation in the years to come. Whether that happens is a choice we must make together, and I ask you to join me in putting a stop to HIV/AIDS once and for all."

Congressman Hastings is a staunch advocate for the HIV/AIDS community and a member of the Congressional HIV/AIDS Caucus. In the 112th Congress, he introduced H.R. 1774, the Increasing Access to Voluntary Screening for HIV/AIDS and STIs Act, which increases coverage for voluntary, routine HIV/AIDS and STI testing, and resolutions in support of AIDS 2012 and the 6th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment, and Prevention. Congressman Hastings also helped secure \$48 million in additional funding for our nation's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) in the full-year Continuing Resolution for FY 2011, and hosted a Democratic Florida Delegation meeting on HIV/AIDS. In addition, he continues to support robust funding for PEPFAR, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program, Minority HIV/AIDS Initiative, and National AIDS Strategy, as well as HIV/AIDS research.

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.

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